



Photo by Steve Solomonson

Ice, ice bay-by

Gravesend Bay was a patchwork of ice floes on Feb. 24 after weeks of frigid weather froze it and parts of the lower harbor into a scene typical of the Arctic (or Antarctic). The bay froze solid in 1917, trapping boats and temporarily cutting Coney Island off from coal shipments, which were delivered by boat back in those days, according to the New York Times.

TOLL-TOLL RECALL

Expert: Crossing fees for all, including East River bridges

By Matthew Perlman
The Brooklyn Paper

A plan to put tolls on all bridges and tunnels and drop the price on existing ones could help ease Brooklyn traffic, a respected traffic guru said last week.

The scheme, devised by former Department of Transportation deputy commissioner Sam Schwartz, also known as Gridlock Sam, with the advocacy group Move NY, would levy new tolls on the free East River crossings and decrease existing tolls by \$2.50. One goal is encouraging drivers to use the bridges and tunnels that are better connected to the highway system.

The current pricing policy does the opposite, Schwartz said on Feb. 19 at a town hall meeting in Downtown’s YWCA.

“Our policy is to encourage people to leave the highways and go on city streets,” he said.

Keeping cars and trucks on the highways is a safety issue, he said.

“On a highway, you do not hit pedestrians. On city streets, you do,” Schwartz said.

Another aim for a new pricing structure is the \$14-billion hole in the Metropolitan Transportation Authority’s \$32-billion four-year capital budget, a problem Assemblyman Jim Brennan (D–Park Slope) calls dire.

“We have a mass-transit funding crisis,” he said at the meeting, noting that Albany could authorize the transit agency to borrow money, but that would drive up subway and bus fares.

The plan would supposedly increase revenue by rejiggering the current tolling system, which Schwartz calls happenstance, and also streamline the way traffic moves around the city, he said.

The current toll structure charges more for bridges and tunnels that lack alternative modes of transportation, such as the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, which currently costs \$10.66 for E-ZPass users, while giving drivers a free ride over spans that are near mass transit, such as the Brooklyn Bridge.



File photo / Tom Callan

The Brooklyn Bridge and its toll-free East River bridge brethren should cost more to drive a car over than the currently tolled crossings, according to a traffic analyst.

The proposal calls for charging drivers traveling over the Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Williamsburg bridges \$5.54 each way with E-ZPass, while reducing the toll by \$2.50 on the crossings that currently charge. It also prescribes fees for motorists traveling in Manhattan below 60th Street.

Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon (D–Brooklyn Heights) said avoiding the toll at the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel was a habit she picked up as soon as she moved to the borough in 1981, and that everyone else does the same thing.

“One of the first things I learned was don’t take the Battery Tunnel because it’s free to go over the Brooklyn Bridge,” she said at the meeting. “The bridges have created these wonky traffic patterns all around avoiding a toll.”

She added that 50 percent of the traffic Downtown is through traffic, and that it should not be so.

Many civic activists were in attendance, as well as members of three community boards, and some of the area’s business alliances. Their involvement does not amount to an endorsement, but it means they are all interested in the issue, a leader of a community group said.

“It’s indicative of how seriously people perceive the challenge,” said Gib Veconi, from the Prospect Heights Neighborhood Development Council.

The construction boom in the area around Barclays Center will only exacerbate already existing congestion there, Veconi said.

“There’s a tremendous amount of development here and these projects are adding tens of thousands of residents,” he said. “And they are centered around some of the busiest, most dangerous streets.”

Bill Harris, a member of Community Board 2’s transportation committee, said tolling the free East River bridges is the right thing to do. He laments the fact that he can drive all the way from Brooklyn to his second home upstate and only pay \$1.25 in tolls.

“That’s not fair,” Harris said.

See **TOLL PLAN** on page 11

‘White people don’t eat the way we do’

This Clinton Hill politician made that claim, then walked it back

By Matthew Perlman
The Brooklyn Paper

An old-school supermarket that will soon close in Clinton Hill needs to be replaced with a similar joint, and not some fancy-schmancy shop for white gentrifiers, a state legislator proclaimed on Monday night.

The Key Food on Lafayette Avenue between Saint James Place and Classon Avenue is set to close within the next two months in order to make way for an eight-story residential building. The landlord said he will try to bring a super-

market back once the project is finished, and state Sen. Velmanette Montgomery (D–Clinton Hill) demanded he make sure he finds an operator that will continue serving neighbors of color, who she claimed have different grocery needs than whites.

“Supermarkets are an important part of the community. It’s an important amenity, especially for black and brown communities,” she said. “When you’re talking about a white community, it can be a little boutique, because white people don’t eat the way we do.”

Her provocative remark went un-commented on at a heated town-hall meeting in the Ryerson Towers, a Mitchell Lama co-op complex, convened to update neighbors about the store’s closing and its pending redevelopment.

Pressed by news outlets, she told CBS2 on Tuesday that she “didn’t mean to offend anyone” and called her words “an unfortunate statement.” She stopped short of apologizing, but said she meant that a smaller, higher-priced replacement grocery store would not work for the largely African-Ameri-

can population of the neighboring discounted co-op towers, which is lower-income and consists of larger families than the white population in the neighborhood.

Her office did not respond to requests for further comment.

Others in the predominately African-American crowd of about 100 on Monday night saw the loss of the supermarket in racial terms, blaming it on gentrification and saying it is cutting off a lifeline for seniors who, because of their race, de-

See **FOOD** on page 11



Photo by Jason Speakman

State Sen. Velmanette Montgomery did not elaborate on how she thinks white people eat.

OH THE IRONY!

Judge: Lying landlord lived on dole as he tried to evict tenant

By Nathan Tempey
The Brooklyn Paper

The brother of a murdered Williamsburg landlord may have grown fat off government money meant for those who cannot afford Brooklyn’s skyrocketing rents, and the proof may have surfaced while he was trying to evict a low-rent tenant in white-hot Bushwick.

Aron “Al” Stark spent nearly two years trying to evict a rent-stabilized renter in Bushwick, but it backfired this January when, after a three-day trial, Judge Marcia Sikowitz nixed the eviction and called him “not a credible witness,” saying he had lied in a dizzying array of statements to the court, misrepresenting things as basic as his address and his children’s ages, as well as his years living on public-housing money while raking in income from four rental properties. The city’s Department of Investigation is now looking into the possible fraud revealed in court, according to a New York City Housing Authority spokeswoman.

Stark collected tens of thousands of taxpayer dollars in Section 8 vouchers, rent subsidies that allow poor people to rent private apartments, and had the city Housing Authority send them to his associate at an upstate house owned by his relative, Bushwick tenant Judith Fringo’s attorney found. The judge agreed, and the lawyer said evidence of the scheme destroyed any chance he had of evicting Fringo, a hairstylist and mother of two.

“We got kind of lucky in this case in discovering the Section 8 violations, which blew up his credibility,” said Sarah Robinson, a lawyer with the Legal Aid Society.

The saga began in March, 2013 when

EXCLUSIVE

Stark told Fringo he wouldn’t renew her lease, saying he wanted to move in — one of the few ways landlords can get rent-stabilized tenants out without the tenant doing something wrong.

During the trial, many problems emerged in Stark’s story. The judge cites the following:

- Stark said he wanted to move his two kids in and send them to Brooklyn schools, but he is divorced and the kids live with his ex-wife in Rockland County. He has made no effort to get custody of them.
- The apartment is a railroad-style two-bedroom, and Stark hasn’t taken any steps to figure out what it would take to turn into a three-bedroom with a hallway, as he said he planned. When asked why his offspring could not live on the first or third floor, Stark testified that the first floor could be burglarized and the third floor is too much of a climb.
- Stark claimed that he had lived in the basement of Fringo’s building for two years leading up to the eviction attempt and couldn’t afford anywhere else. In fact, he listed his address on Heyward Street in Williamsburg on mortgage documents as late as December, 2013.
- From late 2001 to July, 2013, Stark collected Section 8 on Heyward Street, paying as little as \$46 per month in rent to Judah Schlessinger through November, 2012, according to a New York City Housing Authority official’s testimony. Stark said he knew Schlessinger from a synagogue

See **IRONIC** on page 9

SLUM DIARY

Reporter recounts renting from embattled landlord

By Max Jaeger
The Brooklyn Paper

I lived in a Bushwick apartment owned by Al Stark (I would later find out his real name is Aron) for one year starting in July, 2012.

He never struck me as an inherently bad person. Shady? Certainly. But not evil — until I found out he may have been bilking public assistance and perjurying himself to evict a rent-stabilized tenant (above). At first, I found his caginess and penchant for impromptu visits to our apartment entertaining — like a version of Cato in “The Pink Panther” who I paid rent to — but now I see past that.

Like all great stories of landlord-tenant strife, mine starts at day one.

Our apartment didn’t have gas for the first month we lived there. Stark told us the previous super took an ax to the gas line out of spite toward the building’s owner. But upon reflection, I’m less inclined to trust Stark’s version of events.

The contractors Stark hired to fix the gas line and hook up our stove were hacks of the highest caliber. When National Grid workers came to turn the gas on, they found leaks — lots of them. Stark’s plumbers daisy-chained three adapters to connect the gas line from the wall to our stove, a dangerous and potentially volatile no-no, National Grid workers told us. It took the contractors two more attempts to hook up the stove. Each time Stark’s helpers worked their magic, we’d have the gas company come take a look, which required workers first trek into the building’s partially flooded, flea-infested basement before entering our unit. By the time we had working gas, we also had a flea infestation.

Stark also did not respect our space.



Photo by Jason Speakman

Reporter Max Jaeger has the lowdown on living in one of Aron Stark’s Bushwick buildings — because he did for a year.

Sometimes he just walked in without knocking, though we made it clear that was an invasion. Once — as he was leaving our apartment, apropos of nothing — he opened our refrigerator, took a look inside, and left without a word. We took to blasting Iron Maiden when he came by, because it made him uncomfortable and he would leave more quickly.

Con Edison once threatened to kill the building’s power because Stark was delinquent on the light bill for the building’s common areas. I don’t know how it got sorted out, but the strongly worded letters from the power company ceased after a few months.

When we were late paying rent, Stark eschewed the impersonal touches of menacing phone calls and hired goons, instead showing up unannounced at our doorstep, often after midnight and al-

See **LANDLORD** on page 11

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The staff of Teddy's Bar and Grill poses with now-former owners from third from left, Lee Ornati, Felice Kirby, and Greg Kirby, second row.

A happy hour for historic bar

Teddy's sold, former management pledges preservation

By Danielle Furfaro

The Brooklyn Paper

The oldest bar in Williamsburg is in new hands.

The three owners of Teddy's Bar and Grill sold it last week, ending their nearly-three-decade claim on the more-than-a-century-old watering hole. In shopping it around, they made a point of picking a buyer who pledged to keep the classic vibe intact, they said.

"We were very eager to find an owner-operator who would cherish what was happening here and not turn it into a luxury steakhouse or an obnoxious chain," Felice Kirby said. "We had some crazy offers from people, but we did not think those would be a smart move."

Kirby refused to say how much they sold the business for, who the new owners are, or how much the new owners are paying in rent to her and her husband. The two still own the building and live upstairs.

Teddy's is the last of 11 beer houses brewer Peter Doelger opened around Brooklyn in the late 1880s. It is named af-

ter a subsequent owner.

Felice Kirby and her now-husband Glen went in on the bar with their business partner, Lee Ornati, in 1987. It was not a get-rich-quick scheme, or even necessarily a get-paid scheme, Felice Kirby said.

"I did not think there was any money to be made in the

Rican and the artists coming in were young, and mostly white. Kirby called some of the treatment racist.

"There was a lot of racism, or people would just give you the evil eye if they did not know you," she said. "We thought there should be a welcoming venue."

Upon buying the bar, the team immediately set out to restore it to its former glory by uncovering the original woodwork, bar fixtures, and tin ceiling, Kirby said.

They also started booking jazz acts and selling a new-to-the-scene beer called Brooklyn Brewery, nine years before its first drops were brewed in Brooklyn. Even stocking that brand — now a baseline at borough bars — was a bold move in those days.

"It was radical and revolutionary at the time to be selling anything other than Schlitz or Coors Light," Kirby said.

What to expect from the latest chapter of the bar's long run was not immediately clear, as the new owners did not return an e-mail request for comment through Kirby.

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SIGGY’S SOLILOQUY

Heights restaurateur: Bridge Park raised rents

By Matthew Perlman
The Brooklyn Paper

It’s harder to run a restaurant in Brooklyn Heights than it is in Manhattan, says the owner of Siggys’s Good Food, who just closed her Henry Street outpost. Siggys Sollitto opened the health food restaurant bearing her name between Orange and Pineapple streets in 2005, when construction of Brooklyn Bridge Park was just getting off the ground. Ten years later, she has been priced out of the area, and said the waterfront greensward played a big role in causing her landlord to up her rent beyond what she could afford. “Now with the development of the park, landlords think they can charge higher-than-Manhattan prices,” Sollitto said.

Health food was an untapped market in the tony neighborhood when she opened up shop, she said. Her organic, locally sourced dishes — such as a quinoa avocado salad and a thyme-sage, chicken-cutlet hero with caramelized onions, roasted peppers, and vegan mayo — were a big hit.



Photo by Jason Speakman

Siggys Sollitto closed the Brooklyn Heights location of her restaurant Siggys’s Good Food because her rent got too high, but her Manhattan outpost is still going strong.

“There was nothing like us. It was all junk food,” Sollitto said. “I knew exactly what my customers wanted.”

She tried to stay in the

neighborhood when the Henry Street space became too expensive, but had little luck finding an affordable location, she said.

“I was looking around the neighborhood for another place, but couldn’t find anything,” she said. “And the prices on Montague Street were higher than they are in the city.”

Sollitto hoped to stay open until the end of the month, but had to cut things short when she found the process of closing a business was harder than she expected.

“I’ve never closed a restaurant before, I’ve only opened them,” she said.

Sollitto is not completely shocked that her creative culinary enterprise has been forced out of Brooklyn Heights, though.

“That’s what always happens to the artists,” she said. “Look at Dumbo, they can’t afford to live there anymore.”

Sollitto launched a second Siggys’s in Manhattan in 2012, and it is still open. But she said city regulations are making it tough to run a business in that distant borough, citing the health department as a particularly pronounced source of headaches.

“The city administration is really making things impossible for a small business,” she said.

Kosciuszko Bridge breakdown

By Danielle Furfaro
The Brooklyn Paper

The state scrambled on Tuesday to repair a piece of the Kosciuszko Bridge roadway that popped out of place just before the morning rush hour.

The expansion joint, which is meant to allow the bridge’s pavement to expand and contract in hot and cold temperatures, popped up at about 7:30 am on Tuesday, according to the state transportation department. The slippage occurred as the temperature sat at a frigid 6 degrees. There is no danger of the bridge collapsing, a spokeswoman for



Photo by Jason Speakman

Construction workers fix a joint in the Kosciuszko Bridge roadway that broke on Tuesday morning just ahead of rush hour.

the transit agency said.

The good news is that the 75-year-old bridge is supposed to come down — in a controlled way — as it is set to be demolished in 2017 and fully replaced by two sleek suspension spans by 2020.

“The bridge is safe and the New York State Department of Transportation continues to maintain it in a state of good repair until the new bridge is completed,” spokeswoman Diane Park said.

The bridge remained open as it was repaired, but the middle lane was closed. It reopened before the evening rush hour, Park said.

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Schemers trick man out of thousands in lotto scheme

84TH PRECINCT

Brooklyn Heights—DUMBO—Boerum Hill—Downtown

A couple of con men tricked a man out of \$15,000 with a lottery ticket scam at the corner of Cadman Plaza West and Johnson Street on Feb. 12, cops said.

The victim said he was on his way to lunch at 1:20 pm when the two tricksters came over and asked him for directions to a law office. They said they needed a lawyer to help approve a \$500,000 winning lottery ticket, according to a police report. One of the crooks offered the other \$30,000 in exchange for the ticket, and asked the victim if he would put in half to buy it, the report says.

The mark agreed, and the trio went to the victim's bank, where he withdrew the cash and handed it over, cops said. The cons then took off, police reported.

Helping himself

A jilted employee used a Prince Street company's debit card late last year to charge \$9,320.49 worth of stuff, police reported.

The owner said on Feb. 10 that a former employee of the business between Concrd and Tillary streets used the company card for personal use without permission on Nov. 28. When he confronted the worker about the charges, the fellow retorted that he deserved it, cops said.

Subway stab

Police arrested a man who they say stabbed a subway passenger in the neck for looking at him funny in the Jay Street–MetroTech station on Feb. 10.

The victim said he was wait-

ing on the platform for an R train at 5:56 pm when the suspect attacked him.

"What are you looking at?" the man said, then whipped out a blade and stabbed the unlucky sap in the neck, according to a police report.

The victim and some other bystanders subdued the suspect until police arrived and cuffed him, cops said.

A bad fit

A quick-moving miscreant snatched a woman's wallet inside a Fulton Street department store on Feb. 13, police said.

The victim said she was trying on a pair of shoes in the store between Duffield Street and Albee Square West at 3:20 pm, and left her wallet on the bench next to her. She got up to ask an employee a question, and when she returned the wallet was gone, police said.

Shifty shades

A thief grabbed a worker's unattended purse containing a pair of erotic novels and a bunch of makeup in the stairwell of a Duffield Street gym on Feb. 11, law enforcement officials said.

The victim said she was behind the counter of the gym between Willoughby and Fulton streets from 6:30 am until 1 pm, and that her bag was on a staircase used by other employees. When she went to check on the purse, it was gone, cops said.

It contained a debit card, 15 MAC lipsticks, some Flowerbomb perfume, and four books, including a copy of "Fifty Shades of Grey," police said.

Far-sighted

A cretin stole a pair of binoculars and other items from a parked car on Wyckoff

POLICE BLOTTER



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Street sometime between Feb. 13 and Feb. 15, cops said.

The victim said she parked her Dodge Caravan between Hoyt and Smith streets at 6 am on Feb. 13. She returned at 12:30 pm on Feb. 15 to find her things missing, according to a police report.

The crook took the Steiner binoculars, a credit card, a satellite navigation device, and the minivan's manual and registration, the report says.

88TH PRECINCT

Fort Greene—Clinton Hill

Yellow fellow

A yahoo in yellow pants attacked and robbed a strap-hanger at the Atlantic Avenue–Barclays Center station on Feb. 20, the authorities said.

The victim said he was waiting for a Manhattan-bound Q train at 4:10 am when the brightly clad crook approached him. The goon punched him in the face, grabbed his phone, and took off, cops said.

Grate escape

A miscreant made off with some custom steel grates from a Grand Avenue parking lot on Feb. 17, according to a police report.

A worker for the lot between Greene and Lexington avenues said a security camera captured a white van entering the lot at 7:56 am.

The rapsallion then removed the steel grates, loaded them into the van and drove

off, officers said. The owner said the grates cost \$4,500.

Unjust dessert

A goon roughed up a man and robbed him at the corner of Washington and Lafayette avenues on Feb. 17, police said.

The victim said he was at the intersection at 3 am, on his way home from a restaurant, when the villain came up to him and demanded his money.

The guy then attacked the victim, punching and kicking him in the face and torso, and ran off with \$40 in cash and his cellphone, police said. The victim walked to Brooklyn Hospital Center and staff called 911, according to the NYPD.

Free-bar

Some contractors stole a worker's rebar-bending machine after he was fired from a Fulton Street construction project on Feb. 13, police said.

The spurned worker told cops he stopped working at the site between Downing Street and Irving Place at 5 pm, when his contract was terminated.

He returned on Feb. 18 at 11 am to find the new workers using his tools and the bender gone, according to a police report.

Tool crime

A burglar stole a bunch of tools from a car on Park Avenue sometime over during the night of Feb. 17, a report says.

The victim said he parked between Clermont and Vanderbilt avenues at 7 pm, and returned at 10 the next morning to find his rear driver's-side window smashed.

The bandit took a screw gun, a channel lock, some screwdrivers, and a measuring tape, law enforcement officials said.

Mean to pry

A prowler tried and failed to break into a Carlton Avenue apartment on Feb. 19, according to law enforcement officials.

The resident said she came home to her apartment between Atlantic Avenue and Fulton Street at noon and found pry marks on her front door. The wannabe burglar damaged the top lock, but did not get in, officers said.

— **Matthew Perlman**

76TH PRECINCT

Carroll Gardens—Cobble Hill—Red Hook

Home invasion

A pair of gunmen barged into a Centre Mall apartment on Feb. 20, holding people at gunpoint and swiping cash and cellphones, cops said.

The two roughnecks started their spree by holding up two victims in the fifth-floor hallway of the building between Clinton and Henry streets at 10:25 pm, according to a report. After snatching \$200 from one victim and \$100 from another, the goons, with victims in tow, barged into an apartment, where they ordered another five people to hit the deck, according to police.

The villains proceeded to swipe two iPhones, a Boost Mobile cellphone, and another \$35 in cash, then scrambled, a report says.

Thai them up

Cops collared a pair who they say went berserk in a Thai restaurant on Smith Street on Feb. 21, cops said.

The trouble began around 5 pm when an employee asked the two to leave the restaurant between Baltic and Warren streets, according to a report. The couple began shouting

at the employee, and when a customer tried to calm them down, the suspects started to attack the woman, punching and kicking her repeatedly, per police.

Law enforcement arrived on the scene shortly before 5:30 pm and slapped bracelets on the accused as they tried to wriggle and kick free, officers said. Cops charged the couple with assault and resisting arrest.

Hook crook

A burglar stole a chunk of cash from the office drawer of a Coffey Street contracting business between Feb. 20 and Feb. 21, cops said.

The sneak hopped a fence and busted the doorknob to break into the office between Dwight and Richards streets sometime between 5 pm on Feb. 20 and 5 the next morning, and made off with \$600 in cash, according to a report.

— **Noah Hurowitz**

68TH PRECINCT

Bay Ridge—Dyker Heights

Computer crib

Three goons stole a lady's laptop near 66th Street and 12th Avenue in Dyker Heights on Feb. 20, according to the authorities.

The bandits jumped out of a car and ripped her computer bag from her arm, then fled in their black getaway vehicle, police said. They didn't display any weapons, and the victim was not injured, a police report says.

Left behind

Two purses were stolen after their owners left them in bathrooms, officers said.

• The first lady lost her luggage when she left it in the bathroom of a restaurant near 88th Street and Fourth Avenue in Bay Ridge on Feb. 16, cops said.

The woman said she forgot her bag in the bathroom at 5:45 pm, returning minutes later to find it was gone, according to a report. The purse contained credit cards, car keys, and \$100, the report states.

• Another woman's bag walked away after she went to the water closet in a 63rd

Street store on Feb. 21, police said.

The bag disappeared from the store near Eighth Avenue in Dyker Heights at 1:15 pm, according to the NYPD. It contained a cellphone, credit cards, and \$520, officials said.

— **Max Jaeger**

94TH PRECINCT

Greenpoint—Northside

Bad hookup

A house-guest ripped off a man's Metropolitan Avenue home on Feb. 16, cops reported.

The victim said that he met a guy at a bar on Lorimer Street and invited him back to his apartment between Wythe Avenue and Berry Street.

The two fellows fell asleep at 4 am, and when the victim woke up at 5 pm, he found his smartphone, wallet, credit cards, clothing, and glasses all taken, according to police.

Grab bag

A sneak-thief ran off with a black bag containing \$12,000 in cash from a Withers Street office on Feb. 17, according to officers.

An employee of the company between Morgan and Vardervoort streets said that he came back from making deliveries at 2 pm and put the black bag full of cash in a cubicle corner, a police report says.

The worker went to move his double-parked truck, and when he came back, the bag was nowhere to be found, he said.

90TH PRECINCT

Southside—Bushwick

Run Lola Run

A gun-wielding goon tried to rob a woman on Varret Street on Feb. 21, but she escaped, cops said.

The victim said that she was between Bushwick Avenue and White Street at 5:20 pm when the jabroni jammed a gun in her face.

"Give me your wallet," he supposedly said. "All I want is your wallet."

The woman turned and

ran, and the mugger did not give chase, law enforcement officials said.

Trapped

A bandit broke into a woman's Meserole Street apartment on Feb. 21 while she was in the bathroom and trapped her in there, according to the authorities.

The victim said that she was using the bathroom of her abode between Humboldt Street and Bushwick Avenue at 7 pm when she heard someone outside the door.

She tried to open it, but the fiend held it closed from the other side, according to police.

When she finally got out, she saw snow on the floor beside the fire escape a report says.

A neighbor saw the scoundrel up the fire escape toward an adjacent roof, cops said.

To the point

Police arrested a woman who they say stabbed her friend in the cheek with a ballpoint pen on Gerry Street on Feb. 19.

The victim said that she was arguing with her friend inside of an apartment between Throop Avenue and Broadway at 5 am when her compatriot got steamed and threatened her with a butter knife.

The angry woman left, but returned to do the deed, cops said.

She fought back

A man was arrested for snatching a phone out of a G train passenger's hand at the Flushing Avenue station on Feb. 17, NYPD officials said.

The victim said that she was sitting on the train at 11 am when the suspect grabbed the device as the doors opened up at the station near Marcy Avenue and Wallabout Street.

The woman jumped up and chased the accused, he threw the phone, cracking the screen, and officers caught up to him a few blocks away, according to a police report.

— **Danielle Furfaro**

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Memorandum of Opposition

Repeal of Newspaper Publication of Proposed Constitutional Amendments

Public Protection and General Government Article VII Bill, Part F A.3005/S.2005

We strongly opposed to the governor's proposal to eliminate newspaper public notice of proposed constitutional amendments.

Instead of publishing public notices, the Board of Elections would post an abstract and brief description of the proposed amendment somewhere on its website for three days in the week prior to the election. The secretary of state would also post a notice somewhere on its website once per month for three months.

At a time when there is general agreement that there is a need to increase transparency and accountability in state government, it is astounding that this provision is included in a budget bill. Among the many reasons this is a very bad idea are:

1) By all accounts, broad swathes of New York state lack access to modern internet service. Gov. Cuomo has recently unveiled a proposal to begin to narrow this digital divide, and has said it will take major investment over the course of several years. This proposal disenfranchises voters in rural areas, voters who cannot afford a home computer with broadband access, and a significant number of voters who are not highly computer literate.

2) This proposal assumes that New York voters sift through state agency websites when looking for news that affects them. They do not. They turn to a local newspaper. Existing law requires that constitutional amendment notices be disseminated through a newspaper in each county of the state. Most of these newspapers land on voters' doorsteps. Obscure and little-known state agency websites do not.

3) This proposal will not save money. Time after time, when advocating for legislation that would require government agencies to post information on their websites, we have been told it is too difficult or expensive. To ensure a tamper-proof publication of these most vital legis-



Casting off

Theater begins F'Greene residency with big-name star

By Matthew Perlman
The Brooklyn Paper

The stars are coming out in Fort Greene.

A new play being staged by the Billie Holiday Theatre on March 6-29 will feature television and movie actor Wendell Pierce, best known for his work in "The Wire," "Treme," and "Selma." The play's writer and director said Pierce will help put the Bedford-Stuyvesant theater on the map.

"Aside from being a great actor, he can attract more of an audience than we're accustomed to," said Jackie Alexander, who also serves as the artistic director of the Billie Holiday Theatre. "That's what a big-name actor does. But we think the work will keep bringing people back."

Alexander's play "Brothers from the Bottom" tells the story of two brothers from New Orleans who butt heads over a development plan that threatens to gentrify a local neighborhood. Pierce plays one of the brothers, who Alexander said resembles the actual actor a great deal, as both are activists and champions of the Big Easy.

"He has a real connection to the story," Alexander said. "He is that guy in New Orleans."

In the play, one brother supports the looming development project and sees it as a way to restore an area ravaged by Hurricane Katrina, while the other thinks the project will permanently displace residents that used to live there. Both siblings feel their view of the plan is right, and neither is capable of understanding why the other does not agree. Alexander said this inability to see eye to eye is something he often notices in discussions about gentrification, in his own family and in the community that houses the Billie Holiday Theatre.

"Gentrification is the biggest issue facing Bed-Stuy right now," he said. "But this issue causes people to shut down."

The show first ran in 2010, but after a heated panel discussion following a screening last year of "My Brooklyn," a documentary about Downtown gentrification, Alexander decided to bring the play back. He said the conversation ground to a halt.

"For some people, it's the worst thing that could ever happen, for others it's going to change things for the better," Alexander said.

The playwright said he intends for his story to provide both sides of the argument, and to force everyone to hear both out.

"I wanted people to sit and listen," he said. "And they have to in a theater."

The production will be at the Brooklyn Music School Playhouse on Saint Felix Street and is the first show in a two-year residency there while Billie Holliday's home theater in Restoration Plaza is getting its first major renovation.

"*Brothers from the Bottom*" at the Brooklyn Music School Playhouse (126 Saint Felix St. between Hanson Place and Lafayette Avenue in Fort Greene, www.thebillieholiday.org). March 6-29. Fridays at 8 pm; Saturdays at 3 and 8 pm; Sundays at 2 and 7 pm. \$20-\$30.



Pierced: Actor Wendell Pierce in a scene from the Home Box Office series "Treme." Pierce will appear in the Billy Holiday Theatre's production of "Brothers from the Bottom," which is also set in his hometown of New Orleans.

Sketch comedies

Cartoonists and comedians team up for Gowanus comedy night

By Noah Hurowitz
The Brooklyn Paper

We are calling it a draw.

A California comedy show looking for a foothold in Brooklyn is pairing up comedians and cartoonists for a night of drawn-out laughter at Littlefield in Gowanus on March 3. The event, dubbed Picture This!, boasts an ever-rotating cast and new collaborations every edition — which means no two performances are the same, an organizer said.

"Whoever gets matched up, that is only happening that night," said producer Sam Varela. "If you like what you see, it's one night only."

In Picture This!, comedians and storytellers give their spiel

while illustrators and animators do drawings based on their routine, which are projected on a screen above the presenter.

Previous shows have included heavy-hitters such as comedians Margaret Cho and Maria Bamford. The Littlefield show will include comedians Michelle Buteau, who has appeared on the late-night circuit and Comedy Central's "Key and Peele," and Aparna Nancherla, who worked on "Totally Biased with W. Kamau Bell." Illustrators will include Edmond Hawkins, who does graphics for "Saturday Night Live," and Jim Tozzi, co-creator of the Adult Swim show "Xavier: Renegade Angel".

Every scribbler brings a different style or strategy to

the table, Varela said. Some choose to sketch what is being described in the moment, while others build a larger narrative based on the arc of the comedian's story. That wild-card factor, dependent on the whims of the illustrator, is part of the draw, Varela said, and what keeps people coming back to the show again and again.

"It really depends on what our animators want to do," Varela said. "One of our head animators is a big fan of the whole Loony Toons erasing body parts thing, while another likes to sort of layer stuff as the story progresses."

The show began in Los Angeles and has travelled as far afield as New Zealand and Toronto. Now Varela, a recent



The pen is mightier than the pun: Comedian Maria Bamford performs at a previous Picture This! show.

transplant to Bedford-Stuyvesant, is looking to make it a monthly occurrence in New York as well. Varela said she and host Brandie Posey chose

Littlefield for its status as a New York comedy institution, but have not yet settled on a permanent location for the show.

Picture This! at Littlefield (622 Degraw St. between Third and Fourth avenues in Gowanus, www.littlefieldnyc.com). March 3 at 8 pm. \$8 (\$5 advance).



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FOOD

Just encased



It is a sausage fest — literally.

New Bushwick beer hall and barbecue joint Arrogant Swine is throwing an event called Winter's Grind on Feb. 28, where local chefs will gather to crank out all-you-can-eat franks by hand, while local brewers serve up hearty beers. The event organizer said it is the restaurant's remedy to the cold weather blues.

"What could be more fun than 24 beers to try and sausages and standing around telling dick jokes all afternoon?" said Tyson Ho, the pitmaster at the Morgan Avenue meat-ery.

Chefs from restaurants including Fritzl's Lunch Box in Bushwick, Pizza Loves Emily in Clinton Hill, and pop-up eatery Kimchi Smoke will get in on the sausage-stuffing action, with each serving up their own recipes, such as oak-smoked bratwurst, Italian salsiccia, and even a vegetarian sausage. Ho said he plans to make northern Thai turkey and chicken tikka masala varieties.

"The idea is to make sausages that reflect what a restaurant does, even if they do not make actual sausages," said Ho.

To wash down the wieners, home-brew fanatic Joshua Bernstein, who runs tours of brewmasters' homes, has selected nine of his favorite fellow home-brewers from around the city to make appropriately wintry brews for the occasion. More suds will also come from commercial craft breweries, including Brooklyn's own Greenpoint Beer and Ale, Other Half, and Threes Brewing.

And because beer and bangers are meant to be consumed al fresco, Arrogant Swine break out the heat lamps, so you can grill out without icing over.

Winter's Grind at Arrogant Swine [173 Morgan Ave. at Scholes Street in Bushwick, (718) 791-3842, www.arrogantswine.com]. Feb. 28 at 1 pm. \$45. — **Danielle Furfaro**

MUSIC

Cash only!



The Johnny Cash Birthday Bash is turning 10 — and now 10-year-olds can actually attend.

Local band Alex Battles and the Whisky Rebellion has been putting on the annual tribute to the late country music legend since 2005, and it has since grown into a weekend-long Kings County tradition that sells out every year. This year, the party will see the band — plus singer Linda Hills, and old-time outfit the Calamity Janes — play two adults-only shows at the Bell House in Gowanus on Feb. 6 and 7, plus a new all-ages show on the afternoon of Feb. 8.

The kid-friendly session will center around spiritual songs from Cash's album "My Mother's Hymn Book." Battles said he decided to add the new component after numerous friends told him their youngsters were fans of the country crooner, too.

"I was like, all right if your parents are cool enough to take you to the Cash Bash and sing some good songs, it is going to be a good time," said Battles, who lives in Park Slope.

Battles said the bash is so popular because Cash's signature sound — a mix of country and rock 'n' roll — is music to everybody's ears.

"People go, 'I hate all country music.' I go, 'What about Johnny Cash?' 'Oh, I love Johnny Cash,'" said Battles. "He has got this deep voice and these really true stories."

Battles said the concerts also give Brooklynites who have been cooped up because of the cold a chance to blow off some steam — and he has seen the power Cash's music can have on stressed-out souls first-hand. Years ago, Battles said he was sure he was about to witness a bar brawl when suddenly, Cash's tunes began blaring from a jukebox and the music diffused the situation.

"You could watch the blood pressure of the entire bar go down," said Battles. "I find that people, no matter where I am, really respond to him."

The Johnny Cash 83rd Birthday Bash at the Bell House [149 Seventh St. between Second and Third avenues, (718) 643-6510, www.thebellhouse.nyc.com]. March 6 and 7 at 9 pm. March 8 at 3 pm. Tickets start at \$18. — **Vanessa Ogle**



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WHERE TO GO

EDITORS' PICKS

FRIDAY

Feb. 27



Bam-chicka wah-wah

You've seen the Miley Cyrus entry, now see the rest of the NYC Porn Film Festival, running Feb. 27–March 1 at Bushwick's Secret Project Robot. The inaugural event will include screenings of short and full-length erotic films, obviously, as well as talks, art, and a cos-play party.

5:30 pm–2 am at Secret Project Robot (389 Melrose St. between Irving and Knickerbocker avenues in Bushwick, www.nycpornfilmfestival.com). Various screenings \$5–\$20 each.

SUNDAY

March 1

Get swayed

Brooklyn band the Sway Machinery — which mixes Jewish Cantorial music with blues, Afro-beat, and indie rock — does not seem to be throwing its usual Purim party this year. But it is having a release show for its new album "Purity and Danger" a few days before Purim, and no one is going to stop you wearing a costume and bringing your own hamantashen.

6 pm at Baby's All Right (146 Broadway at Bedford Avenue in Williamsburg, (718) 599–5800, www.babysallright.com). \$10.



TUESDAY

March 3



Hawke eye

Hi neighbor! Newly minted Boerum Hill resident Ethan Hawke denounced Manhattan and praised Brooklyn when he moved here late last year, so he's alright in our book. The actor will take a leisurely stroll over to the Brooklyn Academy of Music to present a screening of his debut documentary "Seymour: An Introduction."

7:30 pm at BAM Rose Cinemas (30 Lafayette Ave. at Ashland Place in Fort Greene, (718) 636–4100, www.bam.org). \$20.

WEDNESDAY

March 4

Dreading it

The doctor is in — the library! Doctor Dread will be at the Central Library to launch his memoir and explain how a white Jewish guy from Washington DC ended up becoming a legendary reggae producer. Plus live music, Jamaican food, and free beer.

7 pm at the Central Library (Flatbush Avenue at Eastern Parkway in Park Slope, (718) 230–2100, www.brownpapertickets.com/event/1260771). Free.



THURSDAY

March 5



Canal knowledge

Call it "how I learned to stop worrying and love the pong." Journalist Joseph Alexiou, who is writing a book about the Gowanus Canal, will give a talk on the history of everyone's favorite gonorrhea-ridden waterway. Discover why it is there and why it smells so much.

6:30 pm at Brooklyn Brainers (90 Underhill Ave. between Sterling and Saint Johns Places in Prospect Heights, (347) 292–7246, www.brooklyn-brainers.com). \$10.

NINE DAYS IN BROOKLYN

FRI, FEB. 27

ART, "BOTANICAL REVOLUTION" OPENING RECEPTION: Artist Christina Kaplan constructs her own canvas out of Velcro, then uses man-made recycled materials such as stockings and yarn to combine abstract shapes and colors to capture the essence of herbal remedies. **Free.** 7–9 pm. Remedies Herb Shop [453 Court St. between Fourth Place and Luquer Street in Carroll Gardens, (718) 643–4372], www.remediesherbshop.com.

ART, "THE BIRTHDAY PARTY" OPENING RECEPTION: Artist Sandra Rocha debuts a collection of paintings depicting women at birthday parties, while commenting on age and femininity. **Free.** 7–11 pm. RePOP [143 Roebling St. between Metropolitan Avenue and Hope Street in Williamsburg, (718) 260–8032], www.repopny.com.

THEATER, "THE TEMPLE, OR, LEBENSRAUM": Set in World War II, a German U-boat's mission becomes a journey into terror as its crew is trapped within on the ocean floor. Inspired by H.P. Lovecraft's 1920 story. \$18. 7:30 pm. The Brick [575 Metropolitan Ave. at Lorimer Street in Williamsburg, (718) 907–6189], www.bricktheater.com.

MUSIC, THE DODOS, SPRINGTIME CARNIVORE: \$22 (\$20 in advance). 8 pm. Music Hall of Williamsburg [66 N. Sixth St. between Kent and Wythe avenues in Williamsburg, (718) 486–5400], www.musicallof-williamsburg.com.

FILM, "ART MACHINE": Screening of film set in Brooklyn about a child-prodigy painter. Followed by Q&A. **Free.** 7:30 pm. Ange Noir Cafe [247 Varet St. between White and Bogart streets in Bushwick, (718) 821–2459], www.facebook.com/art-machinemovie.

SAT, FEB. 28

MUSIC, IDA ENGBERG, TAIMUR, KEVIN CASTRO, NICOLA ZANATTA: \$20–\$25. 11 pm. Verboten [54 N. 11th St. between Kent and Wythe avenues in Williamsburg, (347) 223–4732], www.verboten-newyork.com.

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Sting operation: The Brooklyn Nets takes on the Charlotte Hornets at Barclays Center on March 4.

COMING SOON TO BARCLAYS CENTER

FRI, FEB. 27

RINGLING BROS. AND BARNUM & BAILEY PRESENTS CIRCUS XTREME: 7 pm. See Friday, Feb. 19.

SAT, FEB. 28

RINGLING BROS. AND BARNUM & BAILEY PRESENTS CIRCUS XTREME: 11 am, 3 pm, 7 pm. See Friday, Feb. 19.

SUN, MARCH 1

RINGLING BROS. AND BARNUM & BAILEY PRESENTS CIRCUS XTREME: 11 am, 3 pm, 7 pm. See Friday, Feb. 19.

MON, MARCH 2

SPORTS, BROOKLYN NETS VS. GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS: \$40–\$3,000. 7:30 pm.

WED, MARCH 4

SPORTS, BROOKLYN NETS VS. CHARLOTTE HORNETS: \$20–\$3,000. 7:30 pm.

THUR, MARCH 5

MUSIC, CHARLIE WILSON, KEM AND JOE: \$57.50–\$153. 7 pm.

FRI, MARCH 6

SPORTS, BROOKLYN NETS VS. PHOENIX SUNS: \$20–\$3,000. 8 pm.

620 Atlantic Ave. at Pacific Street in Prospect Heights (917) 618–6100, www.barclayscenter.com.

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Find lots more listings online at BrooklynPaper.com/Events

and Ultimaker offer free classes on the basics of 3D printing. **Free.** 10 am–noon. Brooklyn Public Library's Central branch [Flatbush Avenue at Eastern Parkway in Grand Army Plaza in Park Slope, (718) 230–2100], www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org.

ART, "I CRIED, POWER!": The New Negress Film Society presents an evening of digital media and live sound installation that re-imagines the concept of Afrofuturism. A part of Black Artstory Month. **Free.** 8–11 pm. The Emerson [561 Myrtle Ave. between Emerson Place and Classon Avenue in Fort Greene, (347) 763–1310], www.theemersonbar.com.

SUN, MARCH 1

MUSIC, LITTLE LAFFS KIDS SHOW WITH THE GOOD MS. PADGETT: Variety show for kids ages 3–9, including juggling, balloon art, music, comedy, and more. \$5 kids, \$10 adults, \$25 family, kids under 2 free. 10:30 am. Jalopy Theatre [315 Columbia St. between Hamilton Avenue and Woodhull Street in Red Hook, (718) 395–3214], www.jalopy.biz.

MUSIC, MURDER BY DEATH, O'DEATH: \$25 (\$20 in advance). 7:30 pm. Music Hall of Williamsburg [66 N. Sixth St. between Kent and Wythe avenues in Williamsburg, (718) 486–5400], www.musicallof-williamsburg.com.

STEP INTO PURIM: Kids celebrate Purim and enjoy the whole Megillah. Plus performances, a reading, crafts, face-painting and costumes. \$5. 9 am–noon. Hannah Senesh Community Day School [342 Smith St. between First and Second places in Carroll Gardens, (718) 858–8663], www.hannahsenesh.org.

SPRING FORAGING: "Wildman" Steve Brill celebrates another spring of

See **9 DAYS** on page 8



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NEW YORK PRESS ASSOCIATION
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Chilling out: The world of “Old Paper Houses” is even colder than New York City right now.

No country for cold men

Play is set in freezing winter

By Danielle Furfaro
The Brooklyn Paper

Think New York is cold right now? A new play from theater collective Piehole features people searching for meaning in life while struggling through a deep winter freeze in New England. “Old Paper Houses,” running Feb. 27–March 14 at the Irondale Center in Fort Greene, explores what happens to a group of people who leave their homes and stifled lives to start a commune similar to Brook Farm, an intentional community that existed in Lenox, Massachusetts in the 1840s. The director said the play is an analogy to the constant

internal struggle of artists in search of the perfect environment. “It relates to this ongoing conversation in New York about the deferred dream,” said Tara Ahmadijad. “It is about the impulse to stay where you are and try to make it better or leave and make a new thing.” The play focuses on seven characters who are devoid of emotion and feeling while living in the regular world, yet become happy and animated when they move to a commune. But it does not take long before the cracks start to show, Ahmadijad said. “It is funny just how many times in history people have started communes, either thinking no one has

ever done this before or that they are going to be the ones to do it right this time,” said Ahmadijad. Piehole has been working on the play for more than three years. Ahmadijad said it is heavily influenced by poems by 1970s writer Bernadette Mayer, who wrote about Brook Farm and the time that author Nathaniel Hawthorne spent there. “Old Paper Houses” at the Irondale Center (85 S. Oxford St. between Lafayette Avenue and Fulton Street in Fort Greene, www.pieholed.com). Feb. 27 at 8 pm, Feb. 28; March 2–3, 5–7, and 11–13 at 7:30 pm; March 14 at 3 pm and 7:30 pm. \$15–\$18.

9 DAYS...

Continued from page 6 foraging for edibles in the park, with a hunt for field garlic, wild goutweed, and chickweed. The walk is approximately four hours. RSVP 24 hours in advance. \$20 (\$10 for children under 10). 11:45 am. Grand Army Plaza [Union Street between Flatbush Avenue and Prospect Park West in Park Slope, (914) 835–2153], www.wildmanstevebrill.com.

MON, MARCH 2

WILLIAMSBURG SPELLING BEE: Adults-only spelling bee. Winners receive nerdy prizes and a spot in the annual finals. Sign-up begins at 7 pm and is limited to the first 16 contestants. Free. 7:30 pm. Pete’s Candy Store [709 Lorimer St. at Richardson Street in Williamsburg, (718) 302–3770], www.petescandystore.com.

COMEDY, THE MEHRAN SHOW: Comedian Mehran Khaghani hosts a weekly comedy show, with celebrity and comedian guests. \$10 (\$8 in advance). 9 pm. Union Hall [702 Union St. at Fifth Avenue in Park Slope, (718) 638–4400], www.unionhallny.com.

TUES, MARCH 3

THEATER, “THE GOOD COUNSELOR”: Featuring a cast of St. Francis College students and alumni, tells the story of a public defender’s attempt to mount a defense for a woman accused of killing her baby. Free. 11:10 am. St. Francis College [180 Remsen St. between Court and Clinton streets in Brooklyn Heights, (718) 489–5200], https://www.sfc.edu.

MUSIC, LES NUBIANS: \$12. 6 pm. Brooklyn Bowl [61 Wythe Ave. between N. 11th and N. 12th streets in Williamsburg, (718) 963–3369], www.brooklynbowl.com.

TALK, LANDLORD-TENANT LAW — KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: The Foundation Law Committee gives a lecture on landlord and tenant proceedings, and the landlord’s obligation to provide services under local and state law. Free. 6–7:30 pm. The Brooklyn Bar Association [123 Remsen St. between Clinton and Henry streets in Brooklyn Heights, (718) 625–3398], www.fern-finkel.com.

MUSIC, “SOUTHERN LIGHTS TONIGHT”: Debut of singer Matthew White’s album “Fresh Blood.” \$22 (\$18 in advance). 7 pm. BRIC Arts Media House [647 Fulton

St. at Rockwell Place in Fort Greene, (718) 683–5621], www.bricartsmedia.org.

MUSIC, LADY LAMB, CUD-DLE MAGIC: \$15. 8 pm. Rough Trade NYC [64 N. Ninth St. between Kent and Wythe avenues in Williamsburg, (718) 388–4111], www.roughtrade NYC.com.

WED, MARCH 4

THEATER, “A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM”: New Place Players combines Shakespeare’s classic comedy with a meal served throughout the performance. \$75 or \$125. 6:30. Casa Duse [16 Prospect Park West between Carroll and President streets in Park Slope, (646) 266–2762], www.newplaceplayers NYC.com.

MUSIC, “SEMELE”: Zhang Huan directs Handel’s opera “Semele,” set within the walls of an actual 450-year-old Ming Dynasty temple. From \$35. 7:30 pm. BAM Howard Gilman Opera House [30 Lafayette Ave. between Ashland Place and Saint Felix Street in Fort Greene], www.bam.org.

PURIM ACROSS THE SLOPE: Brooklyn Jews, Congregation Beth Elohim, Shir HaMaalot, Altshul, Mishkan Minyan, and Prospect Heights Shul host a joint Megillah reading and Purim party. Free for reading free, \$10 for party. 7:30 pm. Congregation Beth Elohim [274 Garfield Pl. at Eighth Avenue in Park Slope, (718) 768–3814], www.congregationbethelohim.org.

THURS, MARCH 5

MOONLIGHT WALK: An evening of stargazing, hiking, hot cocoa, and s’mores. \$10 (\$30 for a family of four). 6–8 pm. Prospect Park Audubon Center [Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue in Prospect Park, (718) 287–3400], www.prospectpark.org/audubon.

READING, ELLA WOODWARD: Chef and blogger shares her philosophy of healthy eating in her new book “Deliciously Ella.” Free. 7–9 pm. PowerHouse Arena [37 Main St. at Water Street in Dumbo, (718) 666–3049], www.powerhouse-arena.com.

THEATER, “BAMBIF-----/ KAFFEEHAUS”: An exploration into how the Vienna of 1923 stacks up to Brooklyn of 2015. \$18. 7:30 pm. The Brick [575 Metropolitan Ave. at Lorimer Street in Williamsburg, (718) 907–6189], www.bricktheater.com.

FRI, MARCH 6

THEATER, “THE CHAMPION”: Play inspired by the life of singer Nina Simone.

\$14 (\$10 advance). 7:30 pm. BRIC Arts Media House [647 Fulton St. at Rockwell Place in Fort Greene, (718) 683–5621], www.bricartsmedia.org.

MUSIC, THE MET, JESSE ANDREWS, BIRDS OF SPRAY, SOMETHING SNEAKY: \$8. 8 pm. Trash Bar [256 Grand St. at Driggs Avenue in Williamsburg, (718) 599–1000], www.thetrashbar.com.

SAT, MARCH 7

ART, “POEMS FOR THE BREAKING OF SPELLS” OPENING RECEPTION:

Exhibition of artist, activist, and educator Che Baraka’s work exploring cultural and social tropes found in African American culture. Opening reception features music from vocalist Maritri Garrett. Free. 6–9 pm. The Skylight Gallery [1368 Fulton St. at Marcy Avenue in Bedford-Stuyvesant, (718) 636–6900], www.restorationplaza.org.

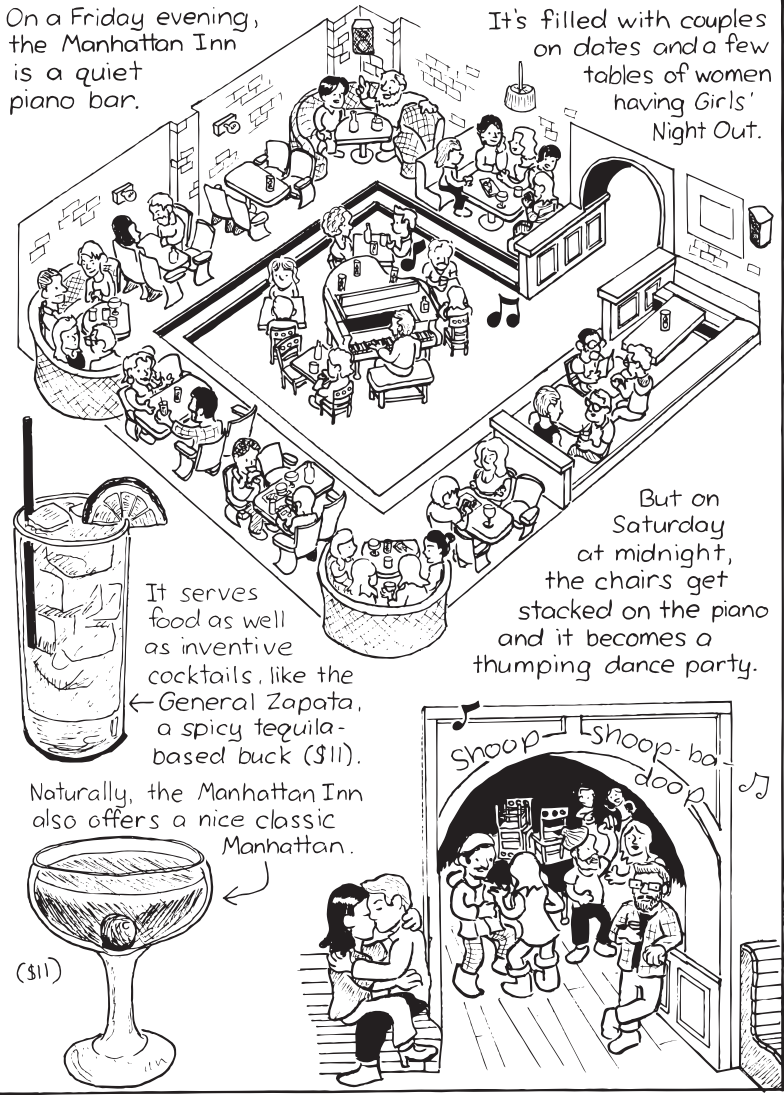
MUSIC, BROOKLYN JAZZ WIDE OPEN: Works performed by jazz musicians Joe Lovano, John Herbert, and more. \$15. 8 pm. Brooklyn Conservatory of Music

[58 Seventh Ave. between Lincoln Place and Seventh Avenue in Park Slope, (718) 622–3300], www.bqcm.org.

THEATER, “THE BAKER’S WIFE”: The Gallery Players presents a play based on the film “La Femme de Boulanger,” about a baker and his wife in Provence, France in the 1930s. \$18. 8 pm. Gallery Players [199 14th St. between Fourth and Fifth avenues in Park Slope, (212) 352–3101], www.galleryplayers.com.

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GENTRIFICATION BLUES

Tenant, lawyer describe ‘cycle’ of abuse by landlords

By Nathan Tempey
The Brooklyn Paper

Between long-time Brooklynites and starry-eyed new arrivals, when it comes to Bushwick real estate, everyone is getting screwed.

Some of Aron Stark’s tenants’ leases, presented by Legal Aid lawyer Sarah Robinson in court, show his rental properties in 2012 being populated by unrelated roommates paying an average of \$1,800 for two-and-three bedroom apartments, in what some renters describe as squalid conditions.

The four properties have 36 open buildings department violations, including for a cracked ceiling, missing railings, faulty boilers, and exposed wiring, and the row house at 1339 Hancock St. has racked up \$24,300 in fines, city records show. Some of the fines are directed at the former owner.

One former Stark tenant named in the ruling, who lived in a three-bedroom across Hancock Street with Brooklyn Paper reporter Max Jaeger and another friend, said his apartment lacked electricity for days after they moved in, and had no gas for the first month. The overhead lights were bare bulbs — Stark told them to buy light fixtures themselves — and some of the apartment was downright



Photo by Jason Speckman

Louis Ramos, a neighbor of 300 Nassau Ave. in Greenpoint, where tenants have been forced out for a year, thinks landlords have gone too far.

bizarre, he said.
“There was a room that was half blue and half white—the painting just stopped,” David Perezcassar said. “It was really weird.”
In the two years Perezcassar lived there, Stark seldom fixed anything, forcing the three 20-something transplants to do the work themselves, Perezcassar claimed. Nevertheless, he said, the rent went up \$800.
A contractor who said he has worked for Stark affirmed the tenant’s characterization of Stark as unreliable.
“He’s grimy,” said the

worker, who asked not to be identified because he works in the Hasidic Jewish community that Stark is a part of. “Not trustworthy at all.”
Stark’s attempt to evict his rent-stabilized tenant comes as landlords nearby are allegedly taking even more drastic measures to remove low-paying renters and take advantage of the area’s overheated real estate market. In Greenpoint, tenants of Joel and Aaron Israel say the pair had their boiler and electrical system axed to force the city to evict them. Tenants of the Israels in Bushwick say they hired

a contractor to rip a massive hole in an apartment floor to pressure them out. The Israels deny the accusations.
Other landlords are accused of bribing building inspectors to fraudulently evict tenants in Bushwick and Williamsburg.
Robinson, the tenant lawyer, said the rent-regulation rules that allow landlords to increase the rent by 20 percent when tenants vacate rent-stabilized apartments, to add an additional percentage based on the cost of renovations, and to deregulate apartments when they surpass a certain rent ceiling, encourage fraud and tenant harassment.
“That incentivizes the landlord to register the apartment at a higher rate than what they’re actually renting it out for, and to harass the tenant into leaving so that they can do a whitewash job of repairs and move someone who’s recently been displaced from Manhattan or Williamsburg in there,” she said.
Longtime residents with low rents aren’t the only ones victimized in the current rental market, Perezcassar said.
“It’s just a cycle of bringing in young Brooklyn kids and spitting them out,” he said. “A lot of landlords are taking advantage of kids coming to New York to pursue their dreams.”

IRONIC...

Continued from page 1 in Monsey, New York.
• On a Section 8 form filled out in 2012, when his rent was \$1,386 and he was paying \$175 out of pocket, Stark listed his annual income as \$5,200 and told housing officials he had any real estate interests, despite his having acquired three rental properties in Bushwick in 2007, and a fourth, the Greene Avenue building, in 2008.
• For a time period unspecified in the judge’s ruling, Stark

collected Section 8 for a second apartment, in Manhattan.
• On a \$1.1-million mortgage for two of his rental buildings, he listed the Monsey, New York address. When asked why he was getting mail there rather than in Brooklyn, he said the upstate address was “safe,” whereas getting mail in New York City is not, a rationale the judge wrote “makes no sense.”
• Stark testified that, though he had once listed the Monsey house as his primary address,

he had only spent summers there following his divorce. He said the house is now owned by Ignat Stark, a relative who he claims to have never met.
Stark’s attorney has filed a motion leaving open the possibility of an appeal, meaning he could renew his push to evict Fringo within the next year. His lawyer disputed the judge’s ruling but declined to address specific questions about his actions.
“We respectfully disagree with the conclusions of the judge and we are considering all of our options,” Ronete Koop said.
It is not the first time a Stark has been in the public eye.

Stark’s brother, Menachem “Max” Stark, was kidnapped outside of his Williamsburg office, murdered, and found burned in a dumpster on Long Island in early January, 2014. In the days following his death, details emerged of his large debts and grim conditions at his Brooklyn rental properties.
Fringo declined to comment through her attorney.
A man who answered Stark’s cellphone and identified himself as his business partner said that Stark was in Argentina until the late summer and that he could not be reached. Stark did not respond to a request for comment made through Facebook.



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Trade winds blow, Nets don't pick up much

The dust around the Nets never seems to stop swirling. Some of it is caused by the fellas in the rafters after one too many tall boys, and some of it by the constant media storm that seems to follow this team. Whatever the cause, at least we can put the constant rumors to bed for the rest of the season.



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Flagrant Fowl

with Crummy the Pigeon

as well be.

And whom did the Nets get in return you ask? Thaddeus Young, who is younger than Garnett, so we have to chalk this up to a win for the Nets. Young will reunite with the man who drafted him, Billy King.


Then again, if King was involved, the automatic assumption is that the Nets got fleeced — and who can blame Brooklynites for reacting that way? With the departure of KG, all the Nets have to show for shipping out three first-round draft picks and a couple half-warm bodies is Thaddeus Young, one playoffs series win, and half a loaf of rye bread. They didn't even really get the rye bread! I just

added that so the deal didn't seem so lopsided!

Thad Young is a fine player. The type of guy who brings some athleticism to a team full of stiffes. I don't know if it's the beers or the distance from my vantage point in the rafters, but I swear sometimes these guys are playing underwater. Young should speed things up a bit.

But he's certainly not enough to push the Nets beyond the battle for the eighth seed. Hopefully, you've been enjoying this cold winter, Nets fans, because with aging stars making too much money, and no draft picks, the next few are only going to get colder in Brooklyn.

At this point, I'd trade Deron Williams for that loaf of rye bread. It's probably more than they could get for him, anyway.




Big man Brook Lopez is sticking around.

Steph and the family go West

"C'mon, up and at 'em, let's go." It is 7 am and time is wasting. It is day five of our California trip, and we have to get up and on the road. Old Route 66 lies just outside the door of our Historic Route 66 Motel, whose parking lot is filled with the rusty old cars and trucks of yesteryear, its sidewalks littered with old long-since-used cigarette machines.

I want to see every bit of California, and I want to show my kids. We stayed with friends in Los Angeles and saw Malibu and the Hollywood Walk of Fame, the handprints and signatures in front of Mann's Chinese Theater. We drove through the desert, stopping for sarsaparilla, corn nuts, and beef jerky at the roadside restaurant and all-terrain vehicle rental spot in the shadow of the Sierra Nevada's on the way to Death Valley. We hiked up a mountain of Borax to catch the sunset, drove windy roads through incredible rock formations formed millions of years ago, licked salt off the



Fearless Parenting

By Stephanie Thompson

Badwater Basin at 282 feet below sea level, climbed to the top of the Mesquite Flat sand dunes and lunched under a creosote bush in the belly of the Ubehebe Crater.

"Up, up, pack up, let's go." I am unsure of myself, dragging my kids to a different place every day, up and out well before 9 am. Am I the greatest mother ever, or will they remember these road trips with a sigh and an eyeroll, wondering why we could never just relax?

It is the same zest and zeal I poke fun at in my fellow New Yorkers, that go-go-go attitude that is a hallmark of the City That Never Sleeps.

But vacations, in my mind, are no time to sleep. There is so much to do and see. I

people traveled for days and days by horse-drawn wagon to try to find their riches, settling in spots for just a brief period before abandoning them when the gems and minerals ran dry.

Lunch at Route 66 hotspot the Summit Inn featured a vintage jukebox from the '60s and we played Elvis in homage to the King, who supposedly visited the kitschy diner. After a gorgeous drive, we are in Ventura, walking on the beach, borrowing a volleyball from the girls' teams practicing on the sandy courts to try our hand (only serves seem to come back to me from my days on the junior varsity team in high school).

We are blessed to be able to travel and I am amazed as I point out all the things that are different from home, the houses on the hills, the palm trees that loom overhead, the world around us that is the same one we live in but that feels so, so different.

We drive through the farmlands just North of Los Angeles, picking our own tangerines and feeding the pygmy


goats as we make our way back to the city. Friends in California have fruit in their yards. I pine for this and wonder why it is that we live in the East, especially this winter when temperatures are reaching alarming lows.

But then I remember there is so much to love about Brooklyn, walking everywhere, public transportation, even the living on top of one another, which often can force us to interact more with our neighbors. And there is the frenetic pace, which I take with me no matter where I go and, for better or worse, am foisting upon my kids.

There is so much of the world to see and learn about, as evidenced in the map I have hung recently on the boys' bedroom wall. Even at high speed, we will be hard-pressed to make a dent in the time we are allotted on this great earth.

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Couple-killing hit-and-run driver guilty

By Danielle Furfaro
The Brooklyn Paper

The driver who killed a pregnant woman and her new husband in a hit-and-run crash in 2013 is facing life in prison after a jury found him guilty on Feb. 20 of manslaughter and criminally negligent homicide.

Julio Acevedo was also found guilty of two counts of leaving the scene of a crash for smashing his Bavarian Motor Works ride into the livery cab carrying Nathan and Raizy Glauber, both 21, to a hospital. Friends and family of the young couple say that justice has been served, but

that no prison sentence could be long enough to make up for Acevedo's reckless driving, and his fleeing to Pennsylvania.

"Julio Acevedo is not only a murderer who killed the Glauber couple and their unborn child, but is also a coward for leaving the scene and

the state for four days," said family friend and spokesman Isaac Abraham. "I would give him three times life. He took three lives, and the issue of the baby did not really even come up in court."

Acevedo was speeding at about 70 miles an hour down Kent Avenue early

on the morning of March 3, 2013 when he crashed into the cab at Wilson Avenue, prosecutors said.

The newlyweds died, and the cabbie suffered minor injuries. Medical personnel delivered the baby and he survived for a day after his parents had died, accord-

ing to reports.

Acevedo hopped out of his car momentarily to view the carnage, then fled, the District Attorney's Office said. Police arrested him in Pennsylvania four days later.

Acevedo's lengthy criminal history, including a manslaughter rap for the 1987 killing of stickup artist Kelvin "50 Cent" Martin, whose nickname the famed rapper took for his own, makes the charges carry 25 years to life imprisonment.

Acevedo's lawyer said he does not believe the conviction was appropriate given the evidence, and that he plans to ask the judge to overturn the conviction at the March 18 sentencing.

"Our argument is that speeding alone is not enough to rise to the level of reckless or negligent conduct," said attorney Scott Brettschneider. "We believe we have very strong grounds for getting this overturned, and if not that, then an appeal."



Isaac Abraham

A jury convicted driver Julio Acevedo of manslaughter and criminally negligent homicide for crashing his car into a taxi that was taking Nathan and Raizy Glauber, above, to the hospital in March of 2013. The newlyweds died, as did their baby, prematurely delivered after the crash.

Park under tracks making a comeback

By Noah Hurowitz
The Brooklyn Paper

The planned overhaul of the long-padlocked Saint Mary's Park in Carroll Gardens will thin crowds at Carroll Park, which has been overrun in recent years, according to the administrator of the neighborhood's community board.

"Carroll Park has been in the unfortunate position of having to be all things to all people," said Craig Hammerman, district manager of Community Board 6. "This redesign will certainly allow for those currently using Carroll Park to have more options, which is a plus for both spaces."

Saint Mary's Park, currently consisting of just a playground, sits on Smith Street between Luquer and Huntington streets, under the elevated F and G tracks. It has been



Photo by Elizabeth Graham

Saint Mary's Park has been closed since construction began on the raised F and G tracks in 2009.

closed since 2009 due to construction work at the Smith-Ninth station. Now, with \$1.35 million committed by the sub-

way contractor and Councilman Brad Lander (D-Carroll Gardens) the city is beginning to redesign the park.

The contractor money comes as part of a deal the parks department struck to allow the company to store trucks and materials in the park in exchange for \$850,000 to renovate the playground.

When work on the Culver Viaduct tracks dragged on, and the original contractor walked off the job months before the August, 2013 reopening, locals wanted the city to demand more contractor money, but it didn't, Hammerman said.

"We were a little upset that the parks department didn't renegotiate," he said.

Lander pitched in another \$500,000 for the project, which is in the early planning stages.

The park woes were compounded by the year-long closure underway at Red Hook's Coffey Park.

The parks department does not have a date set for when it will reopen Saint Mary's Park.

Lyceum's ex-owner: Judge cheated me out of property

By Noah Hurowitz
The Brooklyn Paper

A Brooklyn judge cheated the owner of a landmarked Park Slope building out of his property when she illegally allowed its sale at auction to pay off creditors, a lawsuit claims.

Eric Richmond, who purchased the Brooklyn Lyceum on Fourth Avenue between President and Union streets in 1994 and used it as an events space until this winter, claims a bankruptcy judge lied when she ruled that a court filing to keep the building in his name got to her a day late, and that the auction she subsequently approved should never have happened.

Richmond alleged Judge Carla Craig gave him seven days to appeal

a ruling she filed on Sept. 30 that allowed the property to be auctioned. But when he filed his appeal on Oct. 7, the judge ignored it, claiming it was a day late, as she signed her order on Sept. 29 — and that was when the clock started ticking.

"Due process matters," Richmond said. "If you're given seven days, you're supposed to get seven days — and you can't just change that after the fact."

But Craig lifted the order keeping the Lyceum off the market and it sold at auction on Oct. 23 for \$7.6 million.

Richmond's motion is one of several last-ditch efforts to regain control of his pet project, which was a decrepit eyesore when he bought it

two decades ago. He has battled for the Lyceum since foreclosure proceedings began in 2008 over millions of dollars in liens against the property, a debt that at the time of the sale had climbed to more than \$5 million.

Richmond is fighting his legal battles in hopes of reopening the venue, but he said he is also taking a stand for fair treatment by the courts.

"My main goal is getting the building back, but if I have to fall on the sword of due process, I will fall on that sword," he said.

The new owner, meanwhile, is steaming ahead with plans to restore the Lyceum's facade and convert the inside to condos. The firm, Greystone, also plunked down \$12.5

million for an adjacent lot on which it plans to build a 12-story, 75-unit residential rental building, along with ground-floor retail space.

The decision to snap up the arts center came at the last minute, a representative said.

"While in the process of purchasing 225 Fourth Ave., we found out about the auction next door," said Karen Marotta, a Greystone spokeswoman. "It all happened very fast."

Marotta said Greystone expects work on the rental building to begin in the spring, but the development of the former Lyceum will take longer, as the developer must navigate the strict requirements of the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

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FOOD...

Continued from page 1

velopers don't care about.

"If our skin were any other color, this would not be happening," Roseanne Lynn said.

Clinton Hill was 51 percent African-American and 41 percent white as of the 2010 Census, a marked shift from 2000, when the figures were 72 percent and 19 percent, respectively. The average rent for a two-bedroom has hovered around \$3,000 since the fall of 2013, but the cost of new development in the neighborhood has more than doubled since the end of 2011, according to MNS real estate.

Richard Grobman, who owns the property, told the assembled residents that he hoped to have a supermarket open in the ground floor of the completed development. But he also said he could not guarantee that it would happen.

"We certainly appreciate

that a supermarket is important to the neighborhood here. And we are endeavoring to have a supermarket here in the final development," he said.

"We're not obligated to, but we're certainly trying. I can't guarantee it though."

It is in his interest to give the people what they want, he said.

"I hope that I'm smart enough to choose an operator that can provide the community what it needs," he said. "Because if I don't, I'm going to have a big vacant store."

Ryerson Towers residents said that other grocery stores, including a C-Town two blocks away on Taaffe Place, are too far for seniors to get to.

"Closing that store is just crazy," said Dennis Williams, who goes shopping at Key Food with his elderly mother. "You haven't taken us or the seniors into consid-

eration at all."

Public Advocate Letitia James, who lives nearby and patronizes the Key Food, said the distance to the other grocery stores is too much for oldsters.

"I can walk to Myrtle or Dekalb, but the vast majority of these residents cannot," she said.

Grobman's family has owned the property for 50 years and used to operate a grocery store at the site called Dan's Supreme, a chain of supermarkets his family still owns. He is set to retain partial ownership of the property after its development through a joint agreement with Slate Property Group.

The building is supposed to include 110 rental apartments, underground parking, and ground floor retail, according to David Schwartz, a principal of Slate.

He said the group will pursue a tax abatement that would set aside a fifth of the units as below-market rate. A small doctor's office is also planned

in the space.

The retail portion is planned to be built in a way conducive to attracting a supermarket, even though building it differently would be more lucrative, Schwartz said.

"We could make a lot more money by dividing it up into smaller stores," Schwartz said. "But we listened to the community express a demand for a supermarket."

At the town hall, residents were also angry over the short notice for the store's shuttering, and asked the cops present why they did not know sooner. The site's zoning allows for the project to be built without special permission, and does not require public hearings or political input to move forward.

James said she heard about the closing the way everybody did — while shopping for cereal.

Councilwoman Laurie Cumbo (D-Clinton Hill) said the process is broken.

"I'm baffled that you don't know more about what this project entails," she said. "We're working everyday in the Council to transform the legislation that makes a development like this possible."

James had a different take.

"He owns private property, and he's saying, 'I'm going to do whatever I want with it,'" she said. "We don't live in a communist country. This is capitalism."

TOLL PLAN...

Continued from page 1

In Williamsburg, the head of the transportation committee of the neighborhood's community board had a different take, saying that more people taking mass transit and cycling will actually increase traffic.

"It will mean that people will be parking and leaving their vehicles and crossing the bridge in other ways," said Karen Nieves. "It will add to congestion."

Nieves is also afraid that the tolls will put a strain on already-stretched small businesses.

"It is going to be extra expensive and hinder doing business in New York," she said.

In Bay Ridge, a telecommunications service worker who drives to jobs in Brooklyn and Manhattan daily agreed that the new system would be hard on the little guys trying to make a living.

"The city has increased the cost to guys like me going into the city to work tremendously in the last 20 years — much higher and much faster than everything else as far as traveling in the city goes, and I think it's just another



Community News Group / Matthew Peirman

SAM THE MAN: Sam Schwartz, who coined the term "gridlock," presented an alternate toll scheme that he says could alleviate it.

way to suck more money out of us," Greg Ahl said. "It reminds me of Bloomberg, who just doesn't want us driving into the city, and that's not realistic, because there's too many people that don't have a choice."

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Curtains for Fort Greene

Bed-Stuy theater begins 2-year run near BAM

By Matthew Perlman
The Brooklyn Paper

Started from the bottom
now it's here.

Bedford-Stuyvesant's Billie Holiday Theatre is moving to Fort Greene for two years while construction crews give it an overhaul. Its opening show in its temporary new home is "Brothers from the Bottom," a play starring Wendell Pierce about gentrification in New Orleans. The head of the 43-year-old playhouse said that the more centrally located digs at the Brooklyn Music School Playhouse on Saint Felix Street will give the institution a chance to reach more people.

"With all the transit hubs there, it should be no problem for our audience to come out," Marjorie Moon said. "And we should also be able to attract a new audience."

The star power — Pierce played memorable roles in “The Wire,” “Treme,” and “Selma,” to name a few — should help pack the seats, too, she said.

"Curiosity will bring a lot of people out," she said.

Moon started working at the theater in Bedford-Stuyvesant's Restoration Plaza back in 1974, seven years after the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation was founded as one of the nation's first community-development groups.

The \$4-million renovation should restore the theater to its former splendor, Moon said.

"I was here when the audience used to be captivated by the beauty of the space. It was just phenomenal, people loved coming here," she said. "Over the years it has gotten worn. It doesn't represent who we are anymore."

Moon remembers a time when people would treat the venue like it was on Broadway, and that is something she hopes they can recapture.

"People would dress up in their mink coats and their Sunday clothes," she said. "We're looking to get that back."



(Left) Jackie Alexander, the artistic director for Bedford-Stuyvesant's Billie Holiday Theatre (above), will be putting on shows in Fort Greene while his home venue gets a \$4-million makeover.

formed there as a young actor and Smokey Robinson had his first musical produced there. "Brothers from the Bottom" is the brainchild of the theater's artistic director Jackie Alexander, a New Orleans native.

The Billie Holiday sprucing-up comes as the city and investors are directing new attention to Brooklyn's grand old theaters, with Flatbush's Kings Theatre freshly reopened after four decades and a \$94-million renovation, and Fort Greene's Paramount Theatre in the process of reprising its role as a performance venue after a half-century as a college gym.

"Brothers from the Bottom" at the Brooklyn Music School Playhouse (126 Saint Felix St. between Hanson Place and Lafayette Avenue in Fort Greene, www.thebillieholiday.org). March 6–29. Fridays at 8 pm; Saturdays at 3 and 8 pm; Sundays at 2 and 7 pm. \$20–\$30.

The overhaul is the institution's first, and includes updates to the sound and

lighting systems, stage, and handicap-accessible seats. Another entrance is also set to be added.

"It will really be like walking into a new theater," Moon said. "We're all in for a treat."

The stage improvements are key, actually lowering its height to allow the audience

a better view. Sight lines had always been a problem at the theater, Moon said.

The alterations are supposed to be done by the end of 2016, are being paid by grants from the Borough President's Office, the city, and private donors.

The theater has a long history of giving African-American writers and actors a platform to put on new work. Samuel L. Jackson per-

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Photo by Brit Worgan

Williams-ice-berg

Massive ice floes hug the Greenpoint and Williamsburg waterfront on Wednesday morning after weeks of freezing temperatures. This February has been among the coldest ever recorded in New York, and has wreaked havoc on Brooklyn. The ice got so thick on the banks of the East River that the East River Ferry suspended service “until further notice” on Tuesday, and it remained stopped at press time on Wednesday.

Happy Chaka Khan-ukkah!

Queen of Funk to open this year’s ‘Celebrate Brooklyn’



Sexagenarian superstar Chaka Khan is going to bring down the bandshell in Prospect Park on June 3.

By Noah Hurowitz
The Brooklyn Paper

The Queen of Funk is coming to the borough of Kings!

Legendary singer Chaka Khan will kick off the annual Celebrate Brooklyn! concert series with a free performance at the Prospect Park Bandshell on June 3, organizers announced today. Her set will be preceded by a cocktail reception honoring Forest City Ratner executive David Berliner for his artistic contributions — of the monetary variety. Tickets to that start at \$500.

Khan’s is one of two summer concerts announced so far, the other being a July 21 show by the Manhattan indie-rock band Interpol. Khan began her career in the 1970s as the lead singer of the band Rufus, and decades later she is still going strong with 22 albums and 10 Grammys to her name.

Now in its 37th year, Celebrate Brooklyn! is a summer-long series of shows at the bandshell put on by the arts group Bric. Previous season-openers have included Janelle Monae, Jimmy Cliff, and David Byrne.



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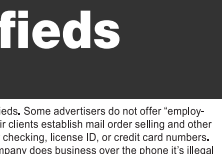


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